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ACTIVE CITIZENRY IN HAMILTON-WENTWORTH:
Making the Commitment to Real Change

Social Planning & Research Council
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ACTIVE CITIZENRY IN HAMILTON-WENTWORTH:
Making the Commitment to Real Change

June 1997

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1992, The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth (SPRC) identified citizen participation as one of it's five priorities for work within the organization. In this same year, the SPRC struck a committee of staff and volunteers to examine citizen participation initiatives within the Hamilton-Wentworth region. The committee developed a participatory action research project, the goal of which was to define stronger citizen participation involvement methods in Hamilton-Wentworth for future health and social service planning.

Purposive sampling was conducted to obtain participants from six initiatives. From these initiatives, both a staff person and a citizen who was active in that initiative were interviewed. Survey data was collected from eleven participants, through a semi-structured interview (see Appendix A). A half-day workshop was held with community participants, to present the findings of the interviews. Focus groups were then held to further define relevant citizen participation issues in the community.

Four major themes were developed from the literature review and the findings:

1. Why are Citizens Participating?

Citizens said they were participating in initiatives because they were concerned about an issue or wanted to be a part of developing a vision for their community. Staff reasons for involving citizens in their initiatives were more varied and included: agency belief in citizen participation; political will/citizen expectations; and, to ensure the success of a government initiative.

2. Who is and Who is not Participating?

This study shows that a wide variety of Hamilton-Wentworth citizens are participating in initiatives, including men, women, people who are disabled, people who are poor, people who are middle-class, and people from a wide age range. It also appears that, by and large, most of these citizens are white. People of colour do not appear to be represented in the citizen participation process, although Hamilton-Wentworth has an ethnically diverse population. There are many barriers that inhibit people from ethnically diverse backgrounds from involvement in citizen participation initiatives, including language and cultural differences, resources and skills, outreach into diverse communities, and the accessibility of cultural interpreters.

3. Barriers to Participation

Barriers to participation were identified by both citizens and staff, and include: lack of monetary resources for transportation, child care, phones, or to purchase materials necessary for meetings; language and culture; lack of media attention on an issue (and subsequent lack of information about the initiative in the community); lack of time; illiteracy; and, tokenism.

4. Resources Needed for Successful Participation

Both citizens and staff agreed that major resources of time, money and people are required for successful participation. Other resources required are equipment/computers, knowledge, and training for volunteers.

Recommendations

1. One of the biggest barriers to effective citizen participation is tokenism. When citizens voices are not heard by decision-makers and their input not acted on, the process loses it's legitimacy. Therefore, citizen participation processes must include a mechanism that allows citizen's choices to be implemented. Without this redistribution of power through an official mechanism, citizen participation exercises are not valid or meaningful.

2. While the climate in Canadian society is to rely more heavily on volunteers and the community to pick up where governments are abdicating their responsibilities, effective citizen participation cannot occur without the appropriate supports. Citizen participation initiatives need adequate resources of time, money and staff.

3. Considerable work needs to be done to include ethnically diverse people in citizen participation processes. Outreach into diverse communities, language translation, skill building and resources are lacking in this area.

4. Systemically, we need to look at how we socialize citizens to participate in their communities. Encouraging a participatory democracy will result in a constituency that is aware of community issues and has the ability to solve their problems and build on their capacities. In the long-term, this will create communities that are healthy and strong.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth (SPRC) has long advocated for citizen participation in decision-making. The need for "effective citizen involvement in the continuing consideration of social issues" has been a part of the Council's mission statement for decades, and in 1992 citizen participation was identified as one of five top priorities for work within the organization. In this same year, the SPRC struck a committee of staff and volunteers to examine citizen participation initiatives within the Hamilton-Wentworth region. The core committee members were drawn from the School of Social Work at McMaster University, Regional Public Health Department, Hamilton-Wentworth Home Care Program, SPRC staff, and nursing and social work students. The committee decided to develop a participatory action research project, the goal of which was to define stronger citizen involvement methods in Hamilton-Wentworth for future health and social service planning.

Since the emergence of the concept of citizen involvement, citizens have come to expect, even to demand, citizen participation. Conversely, it appears that we have entered a period where citizens are either not permitted a voice in decision-making, or are asked to participate in superficial exercises whose final report or recommendations are then disregarded by decision-makers. Two examples of recent public consultations that typify this direction in citizen participation are the extensive national consultation by the federal government regarding the changes to the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) in 1995, and the Ontario government's public hearings on changes to tenant legislation in late 1996. After an extensive cross-Canada review that cost the federal government 6 million dollars, CAP was replaced with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) without due consideration given to the report presented by the review panel[1].

Similarly, the Ontario government released a report on changes to tenant legislation called "New Directions", held a two week cross-province consultation session during which the changes were soundly criticized by tenants, tenant advocates and even by some landlords, then tabled legislation almost identical to the "New Directions" document.

There are many such examples dotting the recent political landscape, but the outcomes are similar. People are participating in consultation exercises, but their voices are not being heard.

---

[1]Lecture given by Michael Prince at McMaster University in April 1995, pertaining to the process of the CAP review.

Despite the number of processes occurring in our community, there appears to be a lack of commitment on the part of government officials to incorporating the results of these consultative processes. Through the analysis of some citizen participation initiatives in Hamilton-Wentworth, and a review of the literature on this subject, we will make recommendations that point the way to making citizen participation processes beneficial and legitimate and to fulfilling the promise of citizens having a purposeful role in decision-making.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Citizen Participation?

The terms public participation, citizen participation and citizen involvement are used interchangeably in the literature to signify the process of people actively participating in the decisions that affect their lives. There is, however, no clear consensus on the definition of this process. The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) broadly defines public participation as "the individual and collective action of people to become involved in and improve their community" (Powell, 1988, 5), while narrowly describing citizen participation as "the collective citizen action directed at influencing government decision-making" (Powell, 1988, 5). Since, however, not all decision-makers sit in the legislature, citizen actions can influence other sectors of society besides government. Arnstein very succinctly states that "citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power" (1969, 216). When citizens have the opportunity to influence the decision-making process, they have gained power. Poland gives a more comprehensive definition of public participation as

> the involvement of people in the planning and decision-making process, who are directly or indirectly affected by a proposed decision or project, and where such involvement is characterized by the exchange of ideas and joint problem-solving (1993, 1).

By limiting involvement to a "proposed decision or project", Poland excludes, however, the possibility that citizens may come together around an issue or problem prior to a decision being proposed or made. Since this is an important exclusion, a definition of citizen participation that does not limit where in the process citizens become involved, is necessary. Bracht & Tsouros offer a definition that has a broad enough process to encompass all forms of citizen participation, while clearly determining what the outcome of this process must be.

> Citizen participation refers to the social process of taking part (voluntarily) in either formal or informal activities, programmes and/or discussions to bring about a planned change or improvement in community life, services and/or resources (1990, 201).

For the purposes of this study, this is the definition we will use to define citizen participation.

The CCSD outlines three goals for citizen participation: social or recreational ends; improvements to individuals, groups or communities; and, influencing government decision-making (Powell, 1988).

"Community" is another term that is used frequently in the literature but again does not have a consensual definition. The concept of community is essential to the process of citizen participation, since it is for the benefit of the community and its members that participation occurs. Bjaras, Haglund & Rifkin offer their definition of community as "a group of people living in the same geographical area and sharing defined basic values and organizations and/or a group of people sharing the same basic interest" (1991, 200). Lee also broadly defines a community as "a group of people" with distinct boundaries, and characterizes the three types of community; geographic, function or attribute, or interest (1992, 13). He goes on to say that an essential characteristic of any community is that it has a consciousness of itself as a group. "Community has both elements - affinity and geography - but it encompass more. Community derives from the Latin communitas, meaning 'common or shared'. Sharing is the act of people being together" (Labonte, 1989). Women's groups have a consciousness of themselves as women (functional), as does a neighbourhood watch. Individual people who garden might not be considered a community because they may not have a consciousness of themselves as a group of people with similar interests.

Wharf defines community quite simply as "a network of individuals with common needs and issues" (1992, p.16). He goes on to say that this definition "directs attention to the two essential characteristics of communities - relationships and needs" (1992, p.16). It is the sharing of common issues that acts as the foundation for any community. Churches are a good example of a group of people whose belief in a specific religion unites them as a community.

Siler-Wells draws attention to the reality of modern community in relation to health. She points out that the first step to strengthening community health is by strengthening the community itself (1988, 7). In modern urban society, communities have become large, complex and impersonal. The old social and economic local networks have broken down and people have begun to lose control over local problems. Decisions come to be made without the knowledge of community members, or an understanding of their aspirations, by people who may or may not live in that community (Siler-Wells, 1988). A key component to strengthening the community is to involve community members in the process of planning their services and solving local problems.

Through the process of citizen participation, the norms and values of community members actually change regarding the problems being addressed and that this change itself is the goal of community intervention studies (Bjaras et al., 1991).

2.2 Assumptions/Rationale for Citizen Participation

The fundamental assumption of citizen participation is that in a direct or participatory democracy, people have the right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Arnstein states that "participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy" but that in reality those who "have not" are not participating in this system. Direct democracy demands that "those affected should participate in decision-making" (Poland - citing Parenteau, 1988), while participatory democracy asserts that elected or representative democracy is inadequate and that effective social institutions cannot be developed without the involvement of the individuals they affect (Lee & McGrath, 1994).

The concept of participatory democracy is quite different from the common historical understanding of an electoral democracy, where citizens elect officials to represent their interests in the governmental decision-making process. This is traditionally the most widespread process of citizen participation, but in practice, there are groups in our society who consistently participate by voting more often than other groups and whose interests are heard more frequently (Head, 1971). Officials who run and are elected to public office are predominately from a narrow segment of the population (white, middle class, urban, male). As well, the government's commitment to a caring society is balanced by its belief in individualism and its commitment to the free market (Adamson, Bushi & McPhail, 1988). Therefore, the interests of everyday people are often counter-acted by prevailing economic ideology and the interests of the power holders. In this way, the process of elected democracy is fraught with inequity that only supports the systemic inequality in society and does not redistribute power from those who hold it to those who do not. Indeed, electoral democracy can be seen as actually preserving the existing status quo, and not as a system which facilitates the redistribution of power.

As Canadians grow increasingly frustrated with the electoral system, believing that their interests are not represented in the process and that officials are not held accountable to their constituents, participatory democracy may redefine the right of citizens to actively participate in the decision-making process. An example of this frustration and demand for accountability occurred in Hamilton in 1996 when an elected federal Member of Cabinet was forced to resign for not keeping an election promise. Canadian society, however, has yet to reach a stage where the benefits of participatory democracy are universally understood and accepted, and many citizens are still content to leave decision-making authority with elected officials. Adamson, Buski & McPhail (1988) argue that government is not neutral and that representative democracy is not "as democratic as it appears" (149) and that in order to become more democratic a role for collective action must be included in the process that presently does not exist.

Bjaras et al. discuss another assumption of citizen participation: "the wider the range of activities, the greater the participation, and the greater the participation, the better the effect" for community health (1991, 199). The more people are encouraged to become involved in the citizen participation process, the stronger the community will be and the more enriched will be community life. Head (1971) also notes that citizen participation groups can uncover and liberate large reserves of energy and ability that have been, for the most part, untapped in the past. This ideal is expanded by Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) who state that even the most disadvantaged communities have capacities and skills that can be brought into play to improve community life.

2.3 Characteristics of Citizen Participation

There are several characteristics of citizen participation. Bjaras et al. (1991) note that participation must be active, and that the people most impacted by decisions should be the ones involved in the decision-making process. They also state that mechanisms must be in place to allow people's choices to be implemented.

Real participation must include a redistribution of power from decision-makers to citizens (Arnstein, 1969) so that input from citizens in the process is incorporated into the final decision. Without this redistribution, power holders would be under no obligation to include citizen feedback in their decisions and the participation process comes to be seen as a sham for citizens who willingly donate their time and energy to the process. Arnstein presents a typology of levels of participation that are useful in analysing the degree of power distribution in citizen participation processes; from manipulation and therapy that are not real participation, to partnership, delegated power, and citizen control which are degrees of citizen power in the participation process.

2.4 Benefits of Citizen Participation

Empowerment is one of the most commonly cited benefits of citizen participation (Poland, 1993; Lee, 1992; Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). Wallerstein & Bernstein define empowerment as "a social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations and communities in gaining control over their lives in their community and larger society" (1988, 380). They go on to say that the purpose of empowerment is not to achieve power over others, but rather to achieve power to act *with* others to affect positive change.

Poland cautions that empowerment has been improperly used by people who talk about "empowering others" when in fact empowerment is not something that can be "done" to others, it is something that individuals and groups can only "do" for themselves (1993, 8). If people have things "done" for them, then their activity counts for nothing and they have no power (Lee, 1992, 12). A system of electoral democracy that does not recognize citizen input, except through the vote, exemplifies a process where officials "do" for their constituents, instead of working with their constituents to solve local issues and build healthier communities. As well, Wharf says that "when governments plan *for* their communities, not *with* them, the programs developed are frequently ineffective and inappropriate" (1992, p.20). In a participatory democracy, where citizens are involved in policy development and decision-making, the programs developed would meet the needs, and build on the capacities, of citizens and communities.

Lee (1992) discusses empowerment in terms of action and control. People become disempowered when their environments are unpredictable and when people's actions do not fulfil their needs. When human beings are successful in meeting their needs, and their environment is predictable and manageable, people feel competent that they have efficacy over their lives. This is one of the benefits of citizens participating in decision-making processes. People must be able to act to promote change to feel empowered. Wallerstein & Bernstein point out that considerable research shows that a lack of control and powerlessness effects disease causation and conversely that empowerment enhances health (1988, 380). Therefore, the major benefit of citizen participation is the redistribution of power from elite officials and decision-makers to local community members and groups. Arnstein argues that without this redistribution, citizen participation is "an empty and frustrating process for the powerless" (1969, 216).

Citizen participation can be a benefit to politicians as well as citizens. Lee & McGrath (1994) discuss how a failure to consult can lead to expensive time delaying challenges to decisions by angry groups who see themselves as being dismissed in favour of the powerful.

2.5 Limitations/Barriers to Successful Participation

The barriers to participation are numerous and complex. Resources and skills for participation are not distributed equally among people, and those without resources and skills are limited in their ability to participate (Poland, 1993, Charles & DeMaio, 1992). Citizens who do not understand the rules that govern Board or committee meetings will be unable to comfortably participate at these meetings. Citizens may not even understand that they *can* participate in their community in this way.

The time, effort and money involved to facilitate citizen participation can also be prohibitive (Poland, 1993 Lee & McGrath, 1994), and the process can be stressful if there is conflict with other participants (Bracht & Tsouros, 1990, Poland, 1993). Tenants' associations that experience internal conflict that is not appropriately attended to and resolved, often feel that participation is not worth the effort (Brown, 1996).

Participation that is not legitimate results in unmet expectations from participants which in turn leads to frustration and mistrust of the process (Poland, 1993). It is a challenge for those who have power to share it because they are not in the habit of distributing their power to others (Poland, 1993). Citizen participation challenges traditional authority structures and leaders may resent increased accountability for their actions to the public. Similarly, the public is less accepting of the "back room" approach to decision-making (Lee & McGrath, 1994). This was evidenced in Hamilton-Wentworth when Regional Council submitted a proposal to develop a pilot program for the Province's pilot Workfare program without first consulting constituents. Public pressure led to an opportunity for public input in the proposal, and while the Region proceeded with the proposal, the public consultation was influential in Council supporting a resolution outlining a set of minimal conditions to be met if Workfare was implemented.

Head (1971) discusses how members of the middle-class are likely to organize more than those individuals from the lower socio-economic classes to protect their interests. Since it is the poor who suffer from their lack of power within the decision-making systems more than any other segment of the population, it is essential that citizen participation within this sector become a reality. However, it is the poor who have the least faith in citizen participation in formal democratic structures (Head, 1971), as evidenced by their lower rates of participation in voting.

Lee & McGrath (1994) discuss timely decision-making as an important component of effective decision-making, and any consultation process must balance both the time needed for effective participation with timely decision-making. Since consultation is also an expensive process (partly because it takes a long time), the pressure to make effective use of limited resources is a barrier to comprehensive consultation. Other barriers discussed by Lee & McGrath (1994) are: infrequent access; unequal participation; disagreement with existing policies; formal bureaucratic mechanisms; language; cultural differences; and, lack of physical access.

Bracht & Tsouros (1990, 204) also provide an extensive list of barriers to participation, citing: lack of official political support; difficulty in determining representatives; taking longer to achieve goals; perceived to be a front for professional manipulation; and, brings out only professional volunteers.

Charles & DeMaio (1992) talk about professional dominance in health care as a barrier to citizen participation. This is caused by the knowledge (technical expertise not shared by clients), resources (having access to staff and other resources to facilitate participation) and the status imbalance between providers of health care and lay people.

2.6 Resources Needed for Successful Participation

A significant barrier to participation are the resources that successful participation requires. It is expensive to implement inclusive citizen involvement in decision-making. Poland (1993) discusses some of the resources needed for successful participation, including participation skills and confidence in those skills as well as the ability to communicate effectively. Lee & McGrath (1994) also state that specific expertise is needed by those doing/receiving the consultation.

2.7 Hamilton-Wentworth Experiences with Citizen Participation

Hamilton-Wentworth has seen many diverse citizen participation initiatives occur within its borders. Some have been quite large and initiated by local government or planning body, as outlined below, and others have been of a smaller, more grassroots nature. The cases discussed below were not studied in this research project.

2.7.1 Constituent Assembly Addressing the Municipal Government System

The Constituent Assembly Addressing the Municipal Government System in Hamilton-Wentworth was formed in February 1995 in "response to community concerns that the existing system of municipal government was in need of review and had the potential for improvement" (Constituent Assembly Report, 1996, p. i). The mandate of the Assembly was to involve the community in a region-wide discussion on the role and structure of municipal government and manner of service delivery. The terms of reference were threefold: to examine the existing municipal government system; to evaluate whether change to the existing system is necessary; and, if so, what options exist for providing such change.

The Assembly was made up of 23 members with two co-chairs, both of whom were male. Of the 23 members, 17 were male, while 6 were female. In regards to ability, race, gender and class, the composition of the Assembly is not known. While the report states that the make-up of the Assembly attempted to reflect broad sectors of the community, all members appeared to be highly successful (as defined by society) people (ie, mayors, lawyers, architects, engineers, etc).

The method used to collect information was triangulation: the use of multiple methods to test the reliability of information received from different consultative methods. These methods were advisory groups, focus group meetings, and a telephone survey.

Recommendations from the Constituent Assembly were numerous. The main thrust, however, was for a single, unified municipal council. It was also recommended that there be a delegation of locally specific community committees to represent their individual communities and to make recommendations on community needs and priorities, to make decisions on locally-specific issues, and to provide for citizen participation and consultation in municipal government. This report highlights this new and innovative method for community governance asked for by the constituents of Hamilton-Wentworth.

City council voted against the recommendations of the Constituent Assembly and there continues to be disagreement over municipal government structure. Recently, municipal government decision-makers held closed meetings with elected officials and a provincial mediator to develop a plan for the region. Citizens were not invited to attend and the progress of the meetings was barred to the media. Final recommendations from this group were then presented to City and Regional Council for endorsement. Currently, in early 1997, city and municipal councillors continue to debate this newest plan and it does not appear that a general consensus is close to being reached.

This is one example of a citizen participation initiative which methodologically developed a comprehensive citizen participation process, spending the time and resources to hear a wide range of constituent voices in a comprehensive but timely manner. However, the process fell short in the final implementation stage by not following through on the wishes and recommendations of the regions citizens' for municipal government reform. This outcome echos both Bjaras' et al. (1991) and Arnstein's (1969) discussion on the characteristics of citizen participation, primarily that to be effective, mechanisms must be in place to allow the peoples choice to be implemented and to redistribute power to citizens so that their input is incorporated into the final decision. Therefore, the process of participation can be exemplary but if the outcome does not reflect this participation, then the process is undermined.

2.7.2 Health Action Task Force

The Health Action Task Force was struck by the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council to develop a "comprehensive health care plan" (Johnson, 1996) for the region. A citizen participation component was included in the process of developing this plan. During the work of the Task Force, "hundreds of consumers and providers" (Johnson, 1996) were consulted to determine what the people of Hamilton-Wentworth wanted in a health care system.

The report released by the Task Force in March 1996 detailed a comprehensive plan for health care, which identified a vision, a set of goals, and laid out a number of recommendations for a future health care system for the region. The results of the community consultation suggested that citizens wanted: "more emphasis on health promotion and wellness; more and better community-based care;... [and] more efficiency and streamlining of services"(1996, p.8). However, people also stated the they would not compromise on "high quality, universal and accessible health care". It was this evidence, in part, that led the Task Force to recommend the closing of two of Hamilton-Wentworth's seven hospitals in favour of strengthening primary care, long-term care and mental health services. When the report was released, there was substantial negative community reaction and the immediate launch of a high profile campaign against this recommendation. The Task Force had under-estimated a point stated by citizens during the consultation process; they would not compromise "high quality, universal and accessible health care" which citizens strongly associated with the hospitals in their communities. To date, there have been no announcements regarding the closure of any hospitals in Hamilton-Wentworth.

3.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of the citizen participation research project is to define stronger citizen involvement methods in Hamilton-Wentworth for future health and social service planning. The objectives are threefold:

- To explore and further refine an analytical model of describing citizen participation
- To develop a common understanding of citizen participation processes and criteria
- To determine the sectors/individuals who are left out of the citizen participation process

This project is intended to build on and further develop our collective understanding of citizen participation issues, and to further the process of effective opportunities for citizen participation in the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Developing the Methodology

The Public Participation Working Group decided that in the spirit of participation the orientation of the enquiry would be that of participatory action research. The process of developing the project took the following steps:

1. **Sharing Ideas and Beliefs**
   In the first meetings, a good deal of time was spent sorting through individual orientations to citizen participation. Through this exercise, the committee discovered a shared belief in the efficacy of participation for service providers as well as citizens and thus reached a consensus on a general definition and rationale.

2. **Developing a Framework**
   In the second phase, the committee began to try to come to grips with the questions that could be raised that would be useful in helping both group members and the research participants reflect on important aspects of citizen participation for them. In this vein, literature was gathered from various disciplines, health and social welfare for example, to assist in this process.

3. **Developing Questions**
   In this phase, utilizing the literature and committee members own experiences, a broad group of questions were developed, as well as an interview guideline, that reflected the issues developed in the framework. It was important that the questions created not only reflected the issues found in the literature but those the group experience suggested were of interest to citizens and service providers. At the same time, some probes or facilitating questions were also developed that would assist the participants in reflecting on their experience.

4. **Developing a Process**
   In this phase, time was spent determining the manner in which data should be collected. An important principle here was that whatever process the group came up with must be accessible to all sectors of the community and should invite involvement and engagement rather than distance. This involved a five stage process: (i) individual interviews; (ii) analysis and development of themes; (iii) presentation and discussion at a workshop of interviewees and other interested participants.

This workshop enabled the committee to obtain feedback and criticism on the initial analysis so that: (iv) further analysis based on the workshop discussions would occur and; (v) a report written that would reflect the voice of participants. Finally, this research was presented at the Seventh Conference on Canadian Social Welfare Policy at the University of British Columbia.

5. Doing the Project

In this phase, the committee carried out the plan which is described below.

4.2 Methods

Qualitative research methods were utilized to enhance our understanding of citizen participation within community-based initiatives in Hamilton-Wentworth.

Inclusion criteria for a community project's involvement in the study were established, and a conceptual framework was adapted to guide the organization of data collection and content analysis.

Purposive sampling was conducted to obtain participants from six initiatives. From these initiatives, both a staff person and a citizen who was active in that initiative were interviewed. The initiatives included: the development of a neighbourhood plan, a regional sustainable development project, the Region's Health and Social Services Departments priority setting exercise, a federally funded Community Action Program for Children, a Tenants and Homeless Information Action Project, and a University participation project.

Survey data was collected from eleven participants, through a semi-structured interview.

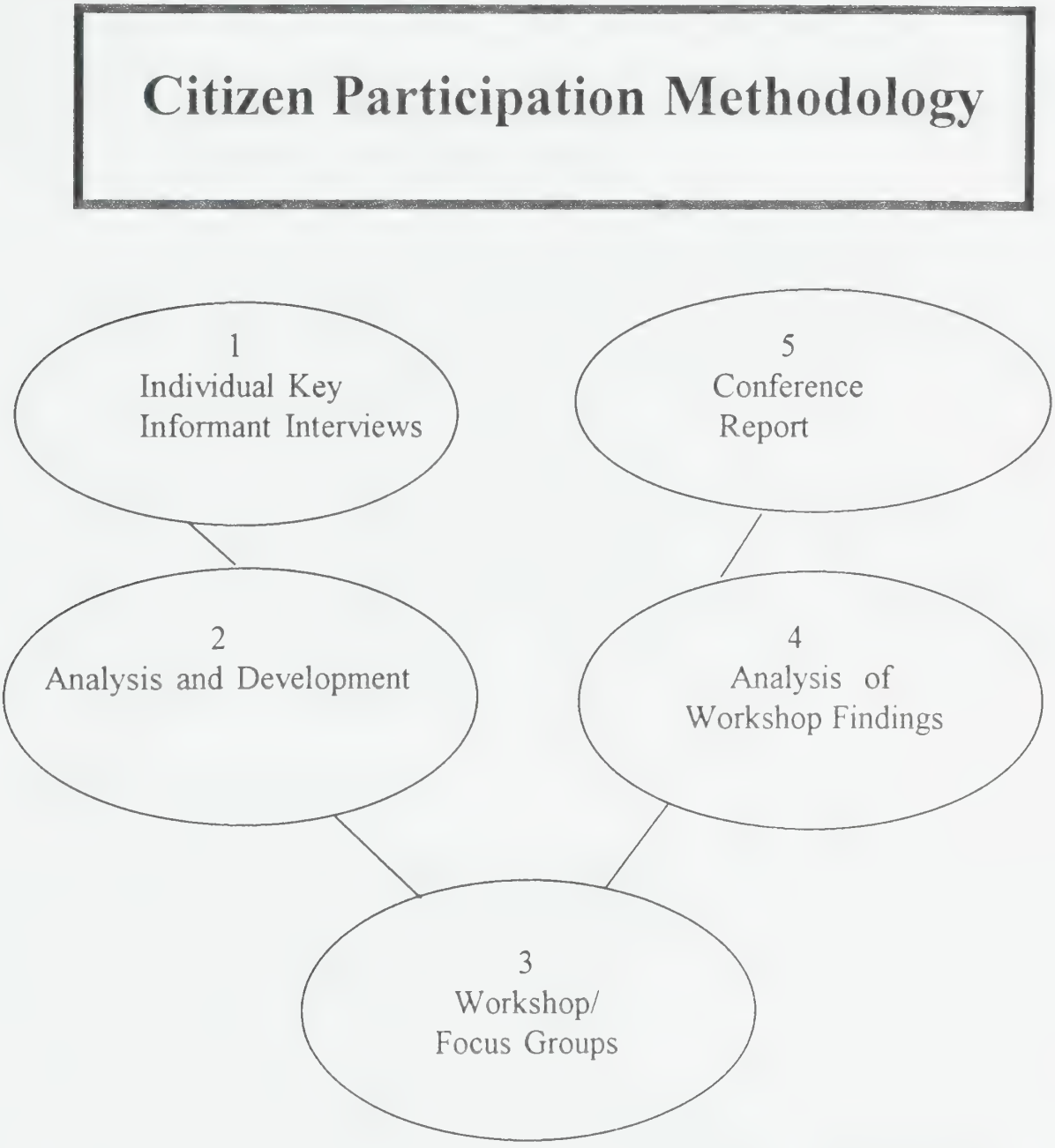
A half-day workshop was then held with community participants, including people who had given key informant interviews, interested citizens, and health and social services agency staff. The findings from the interviews were presented and then focus groups were conducted to further define relevant citizen participation issues in the community.

The data collected from the interviews and workshop were then analysed and are presented under the following themes: why are citizens involved?; who is participating?; who is not participating?; citizen experiences; barriers; resources; roles; decision-making; success of citizen participation initiatives; and, relationship between citizen participation and the outcome of the initiative.

The study was then presented to the seventh Conference on Canadian Social Welfare Policy in British Columbia in June of 1995.

FIGURE 1:

METHODOLOGY



5.0 FINDINGS

5.1 Why are Citizens Involved?

One of the first questions we wanted to answer was why citizens decided to get involved with the initiative. Considering the amount of time and energy the process requires, motivation for participation is especially important to understanding the citizen participation process.

More than half of the citizens interviewed said that they got involved in their particular project because of an issue or need in the community that they were concerned about. One citizen hoped that by being involved with her initiative that she could make the community safer for children. Other reasons given by citizens included: to get something out of the experience (because unlike staff, the volunteer citizen doesn't get paid), and to develop a community vision for the region.

When staff were asked why citizens were involved in their particular initiative, responses included: agency commitment to participation; political reasons (because citizens expect it of politicians, or promises made by politicians); and, because previous strategies at regional government level that did not include a citizen participation process were unsuccessful, thereby making public involvement in government decision-making essential to success. Lastly, like citizens, staff also said that citizens were involved because they were concerned about issues in their communities.

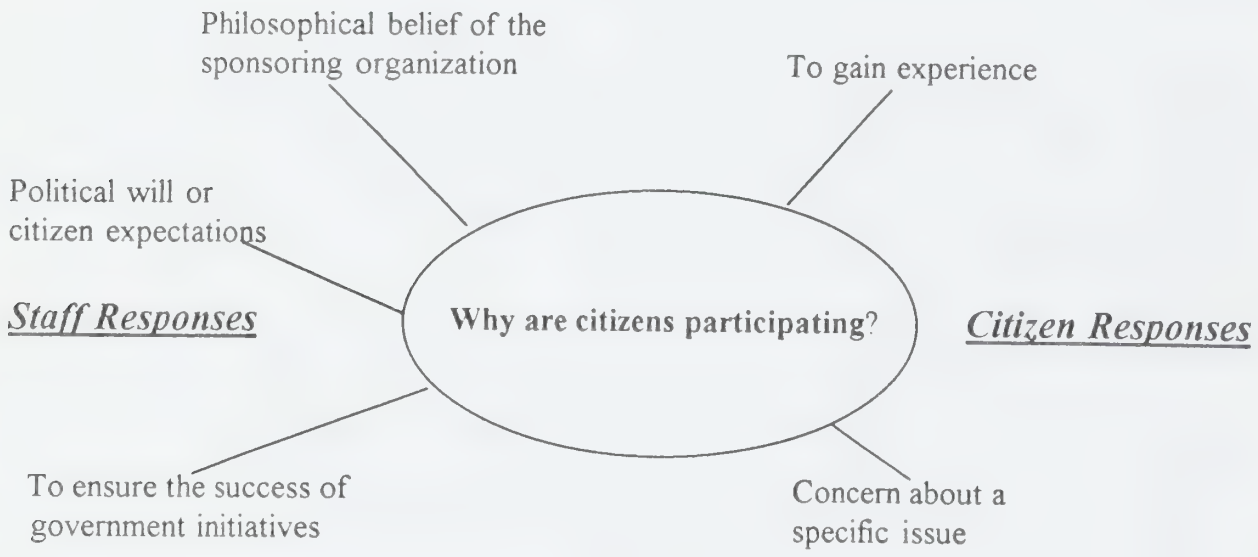
5.2 Who is Participating

It appears that both men and women were participating equally in the initiatives we examined. Some of the projects however, were designed to serve women and so participants were almost exclusively women and children. Other participants listed by citizens included: single moms on assistance; the unemployed; people on FBA; welfare or disability; single people without families; and, people who are disabled. There appeared to be a wide age and socioeconomic range of participants.

Staff responses were similar to citizens regarding participation. However, one staff person said "it was a pretty white group" referring to the fact that there were no participants from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Two of the initiatives had highly educated and higher income earning participants, while another was made up of low income tenants and people who were homeless.

FIGURE 2:

REASONS CITIZENS BECOME INVOLVED IN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION INITIATIVES



One staff person said that mostly white middle-class people come out to meetings and that "people who tend to go to public meetings, a sort of core group of people in any community that are used to going to town hall meetings and...expressing their views and concerns".

Focus group participants echoed this statement, saying that there is "a core group of people who come out to everything and the majority of people who don't come out at all". Many focus group participants wanted to know how to get people to come out and participate and said a priority of citizen participation was to "reach into the community" and to "move agency offices to where the people are".

5.3 Who is not Participating?

Both staff and citizens said that racially and ethnically diverse peoples are not participating in community initiatives. One citizen also said that it is difficult to say who isn't represented because no effort has been made to determine who should be present. Another citizen said, "It is very difficult to attract people to be active members because they have their own needs or problems and somehow they think the group can solve all of their problems but unfortunately the group...is not in the position to solve the problems." It would appear that public confusion on the purpose of citizen participation can ultimately disillusion some citizens when they come out to participate. Citizen burn-out was also given as a reason some people don't participate. "It takes too much of their time...you get worn out".

Focus group participants said that it is very difficult to get people out to participate. One person said that this is a systemic problem because "we are taught from a very early age that we can't make a difference and if you try you may be punished for it. We learn to stop participating because someone else (parent, teacher, boss) knows best". There is a need to change the way we socialize people before we will get strong participation from citizens. Another participant said that people get frustrated from not seeing results and then may not participate in future initiatives.

5.4 Citizen Experiences with Citizen Participation

In the focus groups, people were very clear about their experiences with participation. Many were frustrated with the process and voiced some negative opinions of the citizen participation process with which they had been involved.

Some people felt that the process had been a "waste of time", that citizens were "disenfranchised", and even though people "want to change things...nothing ever happens". The overwhelming cry was for true participation, not to be token "citizens" but to actually have the power to make change and influence decisions. One person said, "If we don't have any money, then we don't have any influence and our participation isn't respected." However, beyond the sense of disappointment with past or present citizen participation initiatives, people still seemed to hold some hope for the future, saying "if we can mobilize large numbers of community members at a grassroots level and lobby politicians then the government will listen to us" and "we need to connect with people in the community who have similar interests".

5.5 Barriers to Participation

Citizens list barriers as: no access to transportation; lack of child care; participation being outside citizens experience so that "even if people read an ad...it may not 'click in' that they can do it"; language; culture; having to purchase materials needed for meetings; and, lack of media attention on issues. One citizen said that political indifference is also a barrier to participation, "City Hall has absolutely no interest in making sure that citizens have meaningful involvement."
Burn-out from the time and energy needed for citizen participation is also a barrier to some citizens participating in future initiatives.

Staff listed barriers of involving citizens in participation processes as: lack of time; lack of understanding of purpose of initiative; language; culture; citizen lack of knowledge/comfort being on committees; lack of transportation or child care; no telephone; illiteracy; and, participation intimidates citizens.

In the focus group, people also identified barriers to participation. People who are unemployed do not receive the same respect as citizens who have jobs. There is a stigma attached to receiving social assistance that impacts on how a person is valued in the citizen participation process. Another barrier identified was language, which was also recognized by both citizens and staff in the interviews. One person noted, however, that even if a coordinator is hired from the community to overcome language barriers "sometimes this puts the community member [staff] in a precarious position because they may not be completely accepted as staff and may not be completely accepted as a member of the community". Language that does not promote citizen participation, that is alienating to people, is also a barrier for citizens. Empowering language needs to be developed for citizen participation processes.

Focus group members also said that organizations may not be committed to citizen participation and that this will form a barrier to citizens trying to participate. Even funding which is supposed to secure a commitment from organizations to include citizens may only lead to a "lip service" approach to participation. Tokenism is also a big barrier to participation because it is not meaningful and people will feel like they are wasting their time. Participation must be real if it is to be successful. Some people also felt that citizens can be co-opted into the Board structure and power system and that this is harmful because citizens need to "work in the best interests of all and not in the sole interests of the Board". This statement fits with another participant's comment that it is difficult for power holders "to relinquish power" to citizen groups. Power is, therefore, a tremendous barrier to citizens attempting to influence decision-making. This is a barrier that needs to be addressed with this type of participation. Confidentiality may also be a barrier when citizens are involved in agency citizen participation processes.

5.6 Resources Needed for Participation

The major themes that emerged from the citizens' response to the resource question were time, money, and people (staff). Three other lesser themes were computers/equipment, knowledge, and facilities/space to meet.

Money was stated most often as a necessary resource to citizen participation. Citizens said that money is needed to rent space to meet, to provide coffee for participants, to translate written material into other languages, to hire a lawyer, and for individuals to want to participate in day hearings, they have to earn enough money to be able to take the day off work. Some of the needs require only nominal amounts of money that could probably be raised through minor fundraising or member donations. When, however, citizen groups need to hire a lawyer, or translate material into other languages, this requires more substantial sums of money that citizens will likely be unable to donate.

Time is another important resource that is essential for participation. Citizens must be able to volunteer their time to the initiative if it is to be successful. Meeting times also need to be convenient for citizens, meetings that are scheduled during the day create a barrier to working people's attendance. Citizens must also be given time to reflect on what has happened in the meeting, and should not, as one participant in our study said, "be pressured during meetings to make decisions".

Citizens must also be persistent in reaching their goals. "...if you decided 'I want to see some improvements' whatever it is...you have to persist and try to raise your concerns even if it's not very well accepted."

This response relates to the next theme, staff. Someone, be it volunteer or staff, needs to be able to contribute a significant amount of time to the project. Since volunteers often don't have this kind of time, staff people are necessary to gather and analyse data, to do outreach into the community, and to keep citizens informed of the progress of the initiative.

Staff responses to the resource question parallelled those of the citizens. Having a staff person supporting the initiative was a strong recurring theme, as were finances for office space/meeting room space, and translation of materials into different languages. Staff also identified advertisements as a resource needed for outreach into the community to get citizens to participate.

Focus group participants identified numerous resources needed for participation. People need training in some skills to be able to participate effectively on Boards and committees, they need to be educated about the process and encouraged to participate. Specific training resources required included City Hall orientation and job descriptions developed for citizens. One person felt that citizens should make up 50% of Boards and committees because "speaking up in this forum for consumers can be intimidating if they have no support". Like the interview participants, focus group members also stated that transportation and child care were important resources that enable people to participate.

5.7 Roles

When asked what roles citizens should play in citizen participation initiatives, citizens stated a variety of roles, including; forming committees, outreach into community (through advertisements and recruitment), making presentations to government committees, chairing public meetings, doing research, writing reports, and running a drop-in centre.

When staff were asked what citizens roles were, again their responses were congruent with citizen comments. Staff said that citizens should identify community needs, form and sit on committees, gather information/do research and write reports, give feedback to staff, set the agenda at meetings and chair meetings. Other roles mentioned exclusively by staff were to create consensus in the group and to get experts to come in and talk about issues in the neighbourhood.

Staff also have essential roles in citizen participation processes. Citizens felt that staff should chair meetings, provide input or information to the group, and develop procedures, timetable and schedules that citizens could then approve or alter. A recurring role for staff throughout the interviews was to provide resources for the group or the project.

Staff felt their roles should be to arrange meetings, to develop agendas and take minutes, to do background research or data collection, to write reports or organize presentations. Like citizens, staff also felt they should be a resource to the group, or be able to track down other resources needed by the group. One staff said that a staff person should be more involved "early on" in the process and then should let the group take over. Overall, staff seemed to present their role as an organizational one to facilitate the group but not to directly be a part of it.

Focus group participants said that staff and citizens need to maintain diversity in their roles, yet not be separate. Citizens also need to have clear concrete roles for themselves and citizens and staff need to have clear expectations for each other. One person said, "we need to move away from the idea of separating 'staff participation' from 'citizen participation' and another said "we need to remove the dichotomy of 'we' and 'they', to 'citizens' and 'staff'".

5.8 Decision-Making

When it came to decision-making authority, one citizen said that citizens were not always listened to when decisions were made. Another citizen said that they found the process very complicated and had a hard time at first understanding the process. Within citizen groups, however, decision-making was based on the consensus model, with everyone being given a chance to express themselves.

Staff also said that decision-making was consensual, with one staff saying "everybody's word is taken into consideration and then we go from there". Another said that citizens were considered to have the same level of influence on decision-making as the...professionals". One staff person, however, said that while citizens advised government committees, politicians still made the decisions so there was no change in terms of power structure in decision-making.

In the focus group discussions, people voiced the need for decision-making to be inclusive. This might mean giving citizens a vote, really listening to what citizens have to say, and citizens having a voice that really matters. One participant said that "there may be citizen consultation but not in the final decision-making of the product".

5.9 Success of Citizen Participation Initiatives

Success was varied for participants. Two citizens felt that their initiative had been successful, one because they had realized their concrete objectives, and the other because he felt that the positive dynamics within the group that was running the drop-in Centre was a success. He stated, "Even if we don't see any changes on the system or even on our situation...when we see the results of being part of a group even to express ourselves and our concerns and be accepted by the rest of the group, even that is very beneficial."

Two citizens, however, felt that their initiatives were not as successful as they had hoped. One woman said that too many people were involved who were not from the community and that they made decisions about the community without listening to the citizens living there. She also said the objectives of the project were not met. Another citizen said that the recommendations their group had developed were overturned by a provincial board and this was tremendously draining on committee members. One citizen said that, although their plan was not as influential as they would have liked, it did have impact on some areas more than on others.

Staff were, in general, more positive about the successes of the initiatives than were citizens. Three staff said that their initiatives had been successful, although one staff qualified the success by saying that more citizen recruitment needed to occur. She went on to say that future indicators of success were: when every committee is chaired by a citizen from the local community; and, when citizens feel valued and respected. Another staff said that success could be measured by people participating, in the sense that if citizens didn't feel welcomed they wouldn't come out. Success in this particular project was also counted as a feeling of connectedness members had with each other.

One focus group participant said, "The small things that happen will eventually change the large picture - must not lose sight of the small things." Another person echoed this sentiment, saying citizens "have to look over the long run to see changes - look to history" to see the successes of citizen participation initiatives.

5.10 Relationship Between Citizen Participation and the Outcome of the Initiative

Citizens very clearly stated that citizen participation was essential for the outcome of their initiative because citizens are in the position to address community needs and be a part of the solution. One woman said, "You need a lot of community input for any action that is taken for the community." One citizen said that the project wouldn't have been successful without citizen participation and another said it was the citizens who got things moving in the first place. It was noted, however, that politicians don't understand the enormity of citizen participation and "tend to treat that somewhat lightly".

Staff were generally very positive about the impact of citizen participation on the outcome of their initiative. One said that it "made the product a stronger one", while another said, "I think also a lot of the needs that are up there would not have been noticed...if it was just staff a lot of important areas would have been kind of ignored, not purposely." One staff person, however, was less positive saying, "I don't know if you get any better product than you would if you just asked the staff or if the decision were just made without them. Sometimes you may get a worse decision".

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Why are Citizens Participating?

Overwhelmingly, citizens said they were involved in a citizen participation initiative because they were concerned about an issue or they wanted to be a part of developing a vision for their community. By becoming involved, people were hoping to make a positive change within their communities and their lives. Siler-Wells (1988) discusses this involvement as a key component to building healthier communities in modern times. Because citizens understand the dynamics and history of their own communities, they are better equipped than outside policy-makers to finding and implementing solutions to their common problems or issues. Wharf (1992) agrees with this argument, saying that while government has a responsibility to policy development, without participation in planning, policies will be ineffective and inappropriate. The citizens in this study felt that their involvement would help improve their community by solving immediate issues or by developing a future vision for their community.

The citizens in the initiatives studied were affected by the issues and problems facing their communities and entered into a participatory model of democracy that saw them directly involved in attempting to find and implement solutions to these issues. While not articulating a theory of participatory democracy, as defined in the literature review section of this paper, by their actions, these citizens embodied the very concept. Through their involvement, they appear to be learning to solve their own problems, to "do" for themselves, instead of having solutions "done" to them, and consequently they are becoming empowered by their own actions (Lee, 1992).

Staff motives for involving citizens in their initiatives were more varied and not always based entirely on a belief in citizen participation. While one staff said that their agency was committed to the concept of citizen participation in decision-making, other reasons for citizen involvement were more pragmatic, based on political promises or experiences with previous attempts at local decision-making that failed due to a lack of citizen involvement and subsequent lack of public acceptance. This latter reason is supported by Lee & McGrath (1994), who suggest that a failure to consult may lead to costly time delays as citizens challenge the decisions of the power holders.

6.2 Who is and Who is Not Participating?

While this study shows that a wide variety of Hamilton-Wentworth citizens are involved in the citizen participation initiatives, including men, women, people who are disabled, people who are poor, people who are middle class, and people from a wide age range, it appears that by and large most of these citizens are white.[2] People of colour[3] do not appear to be represented in the citizen participation process, although Hamilton-Wentworth has an ethnically diverse population.[4] Barriers which may inhibit people from ethnically diverse backgrounds from involvement in citizen participation initiatives include language and cultural differences (Lee & McGrath, 1994), and resources and skills to participate (Poland, 1993, Charles & DeMaio, 1992). Outreach into ethnically diverse communities is a challenge that needs to be met if citizen participation exercises are to be inclusive methods of involving all citizens. This includes advertising initiatives in different languages in all the small ethnic community papers, having resources for interpreting services, and having a worker who is sensitive to cultural issues and who is able to go into communities and discuss participation initiatives with citizens. This issue was identified by Brown (1996) in a study of tenant associations. One of the major challenges for the community development worker in this study was to facilitate the involvement of tenants from diverse backgrounds in the associations.

This lack of participation is indicative of the larger systemic problem which excludes people from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds from mainstream activities and organizations. The United Way of Hamilton-Wentworth & Burlington has recognized this issue in service delivery and therefore incorporated a multicultural policy into their funding criteria for 1996. Indeed, even for agencies who advocate on behalf of anti-racist policy and inclusive planning, like the SPRC, implementing this ideology often falls short of intended goals. The Citizen Participation Working Group that designed this study is one example of an SPRC committee that was not ethnically diverse. Outreach into ethnically diverse communities is vital to ensuring that citizens involved in participation processes are reflective of the community at large.

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[2] "White" is defined as "a social colour...to refer to people belonging to the dominate group in Canada" (Arnold, et al., 1991, 7).

[3] "People of colour is a term we use to apply to all people(s) who are not seen as White by the dominant culture. This includes Black, Native, Chinese, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Filipino, and Latin American Canadians" (Arnold, et al., 1991, 7).

[4] "It is difficult to determine the exact percentage of people living in Hamilton-Wentworth who are people of colour due to the manner in which Statistics Canada collects this information. What is known is that, in 1991, 24% of Hamilton's population was comprised of immigrants, and there is a shift away from predominately white immigrants to immigrants identified as "visible minorities"." (DeSantis, 1993, 9-12).

Interestingly, who is participating appears to be a "core group of people who come out to everything" and who are "mostly white, middle class" people. Bracht & Tsouros (1990) discuss this as a barrier to participation, stating that citizen participation processes tend to bring out "professional volunteers". This finding is also supported by Head (1971) who states that members of the middle class are more likely to organize to protect their interests than people who are poor, and also fits with what Poland (1993) and Charles & DeMaio (1992) are saying when they talk about participants needing the skills and resources to become involved. Middle class people are more likely to understand formal and informal rules that govern committees or meetings because these rules are within their experiential realm. They also understand that the purpose of citizen participation initiatives are to facilitate the involvement of everyday people, but those who do not belong to the middle class may not understand that they are allowed, even encouraged, to participate in initiatives. Because citizen participation is outside of their personal experiences and/or culture, "it may not 'click in' that they can do it", as one citizen in this study stated. Middle class people tend to feel more comfortable in these types of situations because they have the skills that allow them to participate effectively, which makes them more likely to become involved in initiatives. People who are poor may not have these same skills because the structure of these types of initiatives are outside their own experiences and comfort zone, and therefore may be less likely to participate than the middle class. As Alinsky (1971) so clearly points out, one must start where the person is or any attempt to organize will be met with failure. Since it is people who are poor who are impacted most by social isolation and the decision-making processes, it is these people who need to be included in citizen participation initiatives.

Some of the citizens in this study indicated that it is very difficult to get people out to participate because it is something that Canadians are taught not to do. So while participatory democracy is discussed at length in academic literature, it appears that this concept has not been wholly understood and accepted by citizens. Some people appear to be content to leave decision-making to elected officials, while others may have grown frustrated with a process that has not met their expectations and is therefore not seen as legitimate (Poland, 1993). Focus group participants in this study verbalized this frustration quite succinctly, but still managed to remain positive about the concept of citizen participation, saying the future lay in mobilizing more community members to participation.

6.3 Barriers to Participation

Participants in this studied listed many of the barriers to participation already discussed in the literature. A lack of transportation, child care, or the money to purchase needed materials for meetings were identified by citizens, and in the literature, as barriers to participation (Poland, 1993; Lee & McGrath, 1994; Charles & DeMaio, 1992). These barriers can be categorized as a lack of monetary resources. Again, it is people who are poor that are denied access to participation initiatives because they cannot afford to hire a babysitter for a couple of evenings a month, or do not have the money to purchase bus tickets so they can get to the meetings. The willingness to participate is hindered by a lack of personal resources.

Citizens, as well as Lee & McGrath (1994), also identified language and culture as barriers faced by people who do not understand written or verbal English, and who do not have a cultural background that includes citizen participation activities. This barrier is very evident by the lack of ethnic diversity in the initiatives studied in this paper and again brings us face-to-face with the challenge of how to include people from other cultures in citizen participation processes. In a similar vein, focus group participants also noted that empowering language needs to be developed for citizen participation processes so that people are not inhibited by terminology and jargon that they do not understand. In both cases, language can be a powerful barrier to citizen participation exercises.

The lack of media attention regarding an issue with which citizens might wish to get involved raises the question of how people find out what is happening in the decision-making arena. Much of what occurs in local levels of government, as well as in local agencies, directly affects people in the community. One of the first barriers to participating in discussions on issues of interest is actually knowing that these discussions are occurring. Some community consultation initiatives are advertised in the local mainstream newspapers or on community cable stations, but many people do not read the paper, or cannot afford cable, and others are not able to read English and so do not subscribe to that particular newspaper or watch the community cable channel. Informing the community that consultation initiatives are taking place is a first step to reducing barriers to participation.

Many of the staff responses to the question of barriers were similar to citizen responses. One of the other areas identified by staff can also be categorized under the umbrella of a lack of monetary resources, such as no telephone. Staff also identified a lack of time and illiteracy as barriers to citizen becoming involved, as well as an intimidating process. This hesitancy to become involved in what is perceived as an intimidating situation relates to the issue of having the experiences and skills to participate comfortably.

Without these personal resources, people will be reluctant to place themselves in challenging situations and will tend not to participate.

Focus group participants talked about power structures in terms of barriers to participation. They identified tokenism as a problem because it makes the process meaningless when citizens have no real power to make change. Tokenism is symptomatic of the decision-makers reluctance to relinquish any of their power to citizens, and this is a serious impediment to any valid citizen participation process. Indeed, Arnstein (1969) states that without this redistribution, participation is not real. Bjaras et al. (1991) also say that mechanisms must be in place that allow the implementation of citizen choices. Tokenism defeats citizen participation because it does not redistribute power and does not allow for citizens to have an impact on decision-making. Further, it alienates citizens from other citizen participation initiatives that might be more serious.

6.4 Resources Needed for Successful Participation

Sufficient resources must be available to support the initiative. Both citizens and staff agreed that major resources of time, money and people are required. Time is an essential component because citizen participation initiatives must be process oriented. People need to be able to find the time to meet, when it is convenient for as many citizens as possible; time to discuss the issue and explore causation and solutions; and, time to develop and then implement agreed upon solutions. They may also need time to become comfortable with the process before they begin to participate. The length of time needed for good process must also be balanced with timely decision-making (Lee & McGrath, 1994). Dilemmas that have risen to the level of needing to be addressed are generally in need of solutions sooner, rather than later, especially if safety is a concern or if deadlines have to be met. Therefore, successful participation initiatives will find a way to balance the time needed for good process with timely decision-making.

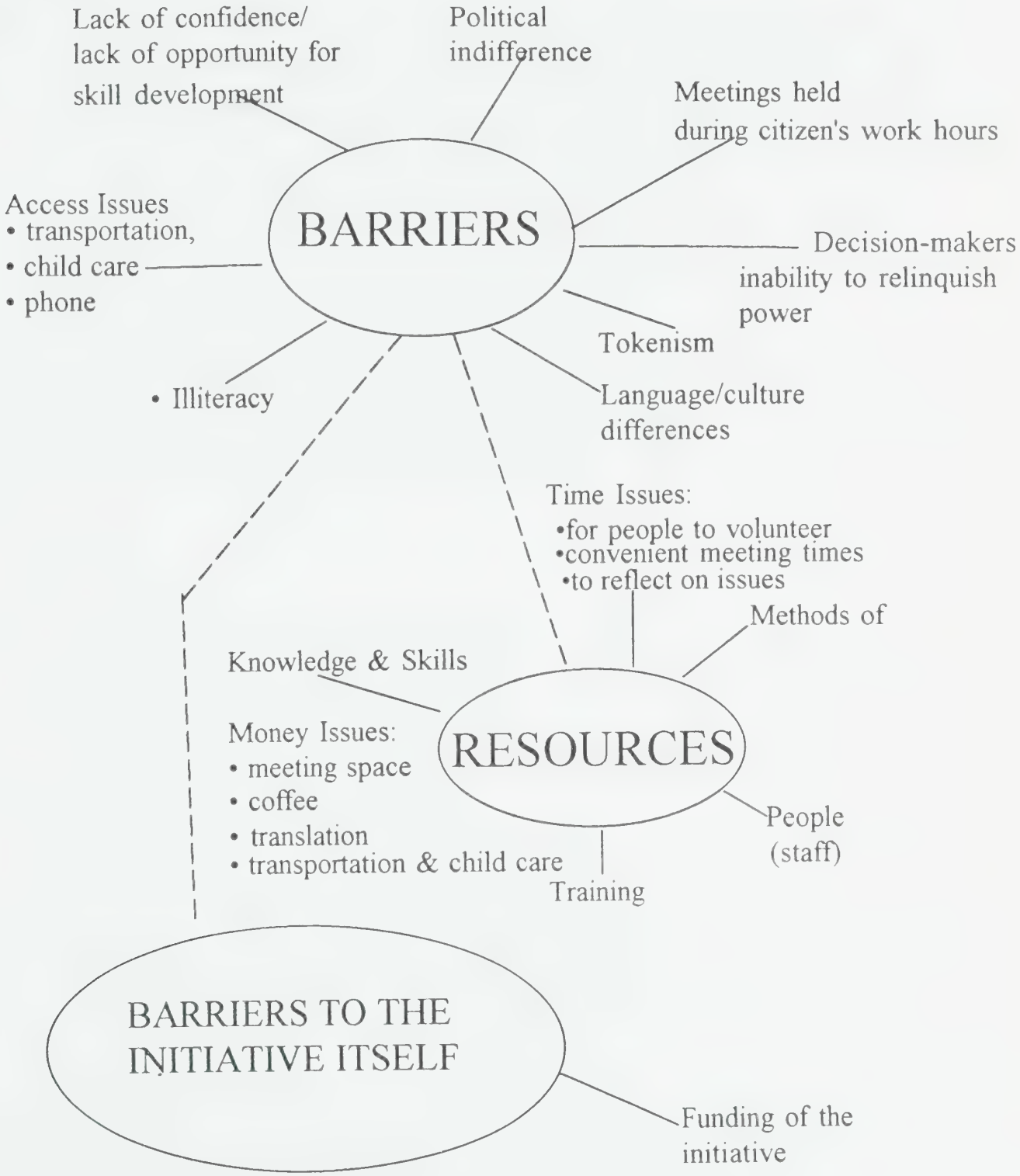
Money is a necessary resource. Citizens need to be compensated for expenses they incur as a result of their participation. Child care should be provided at the meeting site, or paid for if this is not feasible. Bus tickets need to be provided or car pooling arranged, and a method of getting in touch with people who do not have a telephone needs to be developed. Materials like meeting agendas, minutes or reports must be made available to citizens without a cost. Without these resources, the most marginalized members of society will not be able to be involved. Money is also required for language translation of written materials, translators at meetings and for outreach into ethnically diverse communities.

People, usually staff but also volunteers, who have generous amounts of time to donate, are also a needed resource. People are needed to organize meeting times and places, set agendas, be responsible for minutes, and to act as a resource for citizens. Since volunteers generally do not have the time to fulfil these organizational type roles, paid staff people are recommended as an important component of successful participation. Paid staff people are also able to provide, through their agencies, some of the other resources identified by the study's participants, including computers and equipment, knowledge and a place to meet. Staff are also needed to do outreach into ethnically diverse communities and arrange for cultural interpreting services.

While there are some significant barriers to citizen participation initiatives, with the appropriate resources and experienced people in place, citizen participation can be an effective and meaningful way for citizens to make positive changes within their communities.

FIGURE 3:

MAKING THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESS SUCCESSFUL



7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. One of the biggest barriers to effective citizen participation is tokenism. When citizens voices are not heard by decision-makers and their input not acted on, the process loses its legitimacy. Therefore, citizen participation processes must include a mechanism that allows citizens' choices to be implemented. Without this redistribution of power through an official mechanism, citizen participation exercises are not valid or meaningful.

2. While the climate in Canadian society is to rely more heavily on volunteers and the community to pick up where governments are abdicating their responsibilities, effective citizen participation cannot occur without the appropriate supports. Citizen participation initiatives need adequate resources of time, money and staff.

3. Considerable work needs to be done to include ethnically diverse people in citizen participation processes. Outreach into diverse communities, language translation, skill building and resources are lacking in this area.

4. Systemically, we need to look at how we socialize citizens to participate in their communities. Encouraging a participatory democracy will result in a constituency that is aware of community issues and has the ability to solve their problems and build on their capacities. In the long-term, this will create communities that are healthy and strong.

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Appendix A

November 21, 1994

Dear

The Social Planning and Research Council's Public Participation Working Group is currently involved in a community-based research project. Our purpose is to define stronger citizen involvement methods for health and social service planning.

We would like to ask you co-operation in this project. To gather useful information about the process of citizen involvement, we would like to arrange a brief interview with you by one of our researchers. In the interview we hope to get your views and impressions about the citizen involvement part of the 8~ project, with which you are associated.

A number of interviews are being conducted to gather insight from various people in the Region about several projects which had a citizen involvement component. With the information we gather we will write a discussion paper on the experience of citizen involvement in the Region and issues it identifies. Early in the new year we plan to present our findings to you and other interested community members. In this way we can discuss with each other the issues associated with citizen involvement.

A researcher from our team will be contacting you to confirm your interest and schedule an interview in the near future. If you have any questions about this request, please call Carolyn Cade, a researcher on the project, at (905) 522-1148 ext. 312.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Don Jaffray,
Social Planner

DJ:ce

Appendix B

Introduction

1. Briefly describe what the goals of this initiative are.
2. Why are citizens involved in this initiative?

Roles/Leadership

3. Who are the citizens who are participating? (age, education, socioeconomic status, ethnicity etc.)
4. Who is not participating and why? (ie. are there barriers to participation)
5. What are the roles of staff and citizens in this initiative? (ie. what tasks do staff and citizens do)

Process of Participation

6. At what stage were citizens involved in your initiative?
   (ie. Needs Assessment, planning, implementation/delivery, evaluation)

Decision-Making

7.Please talk about decision making in your initiative. (what decisions are made, how and who is involved in decision making)

Resources

8. In your experience, what resources are needed to facilitate the participation of citizens? (ex. knowledge, financial, equipment, connections, etc.)

Evaluation

9. What is the relationship between citizen participation and the outcome of your initiative?
10. How Successful do you feel the project is to date?

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